

Wisconsin's Benefits Counseling Services

Benefits specialists help people understand their eligibility (actual or potential) for public benefits, entitlements, services, and subsidies including Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Medical Assistance, Medicare, Food Share, energy assistance, and housing assistance incentives. Different types of benefits counseling are available in Wisconsin. Below are the descriptions of the each type.

Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPA&O)

The Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach Program is a national demonstration project funded by the Social Security Administration. The goal of the BPA&O Program is to provide statewide outreach and benefits planning and assistance services to beneficiaries with disabilities about Federal, State and local work incentives programs and related issues.

Services Provided

- Information and Referral
- Benefit Problem Solving and Advocacy
- Benefits Analysis and Advisement
- Benefits Support Planning/Management

Who is Eligible

- Individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and are
- Ages 16-64

Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach Contacts

- **Employment Resources Inc., Madison –(608) 246-3444 or 1-877-826-1752**
(Serves Adams, Brown, Calumet, Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Door, Florence, Fond du Lac, Forest, Green Lake, Jefferson, Kenosha, Kewaunee, Langlade, Lincoln, Manitowoc, Marathon, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Oneida, Outagamie, Portage, Racine, Sauk, Shawano, Sheboygan, Vilas, Walworth, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago, and Wood Counties)
- **Independence First, Milwaukee –(414) 291-7520**
(Serves Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties)
- **Riverfront, La Crosse –1-800-949-7380, ext. 401**
(Serves Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Buffalo, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Grant, Green, Iowa, Iron, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Lafayette, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Price, Richland, Rock, Rusk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Taylor, Trempealeau, Vernon, and Washburn Counties)

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Fee for Service Benefits Counseling

This program includes a variety of comprehensive benefits counseling services available for community and vocational agencies to purchase. Benefits counselors explore how earnings from work will affect an individual's benefits. Specific benefits, subsidies, and entitlements explored include SSI, SSDI, housing, food stamps, long-term care, and health insurance.

Services Provided

- One-time Benefits Analysis and Advisement
- PASS Plan Development
- Benefit Support Services

Who is Eligible

- Individuals with disabilities interested in receiving benefits counseling and who
- Receive funding, usually through a community or vocational agency (i.e.; DVR, etc.).

Fee for Service Benefits Counseling Contacts

- **Employment Resources Inc., Madison –(608) 246-3444**
- **Center for Independent Living, Menominee – (715) 233-1070**
- **Goodwill Industries, Milwaukee – (414) 353-6400**
- **Opportunities Incorporated, Fort Atkinson – (920) 563-2437**
- **Midstate Independent Living Ctr, Stevens Point – (715)344-4210**
- **Independence First, Milwaukee – (414) 291-7520**
- **Options for Independent Living, Green Bay –(920) 490-0500**
- **Independent Living Resources, La Crosse – (608) 787-1111**
- **BeneSense, Manawa–(800) 386-6249**
- **Aurora Community Services, Menomonee –(888) 301-5897**
- **North Country Independent Living Center, Superior –(715) 235-1839**
- **Society's Assets, Kenosha –(262) 637-9128**
- **Todd Steven & Associates, Menasha –(920) 232-3649**
- **Vocational Directions, Milwaukee- (414) 727-9748**
- **Curative Care Network, Milwaukee-(414) 479-9301**
- **Projects with Industry, Menomonie- (800) 535-6288**
- **Vocational Industries, Elkhorn- (262) 723-4043**
- **Cerebral Palsy Center, Green Bay-(920) 337-1122**
- **ASPIRO, Inc., Green Bay-(920) 498-2599**
- **Rehabilitation Center of Sheboygan, Sheboygan-(920) 458-8261**
- **Riverfront, Inc., La Crosse-(608) 784-9450**
- **Valley Packaging Industries, Appleton-(920) 749-5859**
- **Masters Accounting, Madison-(608)243-8938**
- **Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Lac du Flambeau-(715) 588-3324**
- **New View Industries, Gillett-(920) 855-2128**
- **X-Pert Placement, Milwaukee-(262) 363-9700**
- **NEW Curative Rehabilitation, Green Bay-(920) 468-1161**
- **Chippewa Valley Supported Employment, Chippewa Falls-(715) 720-1050**
- **Milwaukee Center for Independence, Milwaukee- (414) 272-1344**
- **The Haglin Group, Madison – 608-698-2483**
- **Rich Vocational Services, Milwaukee - 414-828-0291**
- **United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), Milwaukee – 414-329-4500**
- **Options for Employment, Appleton – 920-702-7712**

Health and Employment Counseling (HEC)

The Health and Employment Counseling Program (HEC) allows individuals with disabilities who are not yet working to enroll in the Medicaid Purchase Plan (MAPP) while looking for employment. To enroll in HEC, an individual must develop an Employment Plan, which requests information about career planning, employment barriers, benefits, and community resources. This plan must be reviewed by one of 7 statewide Regional HEC Screeners and submitted to the Dept. of Health & Family Services for final approval.

Who is eligible

- Individuals eligible for MAPP who
- Are planning to work within a 9-12 month period

Health & Employment Counseling Program contact:

Amy Thomson, Statewide HEC Training/Technical Assistance Coordinator, (608) 246-3444, ext. 229

Elderly Benefit Specialist Program

The Elderly Benefits Specialist Program is coordinated by the State Bureau of Aging & Long Term Care Resources in the Dept. of Health & Family Services and is available to assist individuals 60 years of age or older learn more about their public or private benefits. The services are available statewide and are provided by a county/tribal benefit specialist or a local provider.

Services Provided

- Assistance with applying for and/or understanding information on public and private benefit programs.
- Assistance with alternative actions that an individual may take to secure benefits or appeal denials of benefits.
- Referrals to appropriate attorneys.

Who is Eligible

- Individuals 60 years of age or older

Elderly Benefit Specialist Program contact:

- Check with your county and/or tribal aging unit for more provider information or **Glenn Silverberg, Elderly Benefit Specialist Program Coordinator, (608) 267-3201.**

Disability Benefit Specialist Program

The Disability Benefit Specialist Program is currently operating as part of the State of Wisconsin's Family Care initiative. The Family Care initiative was created for the purpose of redesigning the long-term care system for the elderly and individuals with physical and developmental disabilities. Disability Benefit Specialist services are available at Family Care Resource Centers in the following counties: Fond du Lac, Jackson, Kenosha, La Crosse, Marathon, Portage, Richland and Trempeleau.

Services Provided

- Assistance with applying for public and private benefit programs for which clients may be eligible.
- Assistance with preparing and filing complaints and filing appeals of denials of eligibility for, termination of, or overpayments of public and private benefits.
- Representation of clients, when appropriate, in formal appeals related to denials of eligibility, termination of benefits or overpayments of public and private benefits.

Who is Eligible

- Residents of Family Care Counties
- Individuals with physical or developmental disabilities
- Ages 18-59
- Clients are not required to be eligible for other services under Family Care.

Disability Benefit Specialist Program contact:

- Check with your County Aging and Disability Resource Center or Holly Laux O'Higgins, (608) 266-8905.